

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 913

By Harper

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend Bobby Hebb for his contributions to the world of music.

WHEREAS, Tennessee has long been known throughout the world for its rich music heritage; from the hills of East Tennessee through Music City U.S.A. to the shores of the Mississippi, the talented musicians of this State have earned a reputation that is unsurpassed in the history of American music; and

WHEREAS, one such legendary musical talent is Bobby Hebb, a Nashville native, who achieved fame for the composition and performance of his 1966 chart topping hit, *Sunny*, which earned gold record status; and

WHEREAS, born on June 26, 1938, to William Marion Hebb and Ovilla Merriweather Hebb, the esteemed Bobby Hebb has been involved in the music business his whole life; and

WHEREAS, on his third birthday, Mr. Hebb made his professional debut as a tap dancer at the Bijou Theater in Nashville; he also lent his talents to a tap dancing trio called the Typewriter Brothers; and

WHEREAS, also in 1941, he joined the Jerry Jackson Revue, an all-black troupe that traveled through the South and the southern sections of the Midwest, appearing on theater stages and under carnival tents in front of racially mixed audiences; and

WHEREAS, Bobby Hebb joined the band at Carter Lawrence Elementary School in Nashville where he learned the euphonium and studied many brass instruments under the tutelage of John Cecil Reed; and

WHEREAS, his innumerable talents at such a young age garnered him a place on Owen Bradley's Nashville television show as part of the Owen Bradley orchestra; and

WHEREAS, he was soon asked to join Roy Acuff's Smoky Mountain Boys, where he successfully demonstrated his singing, dancing, and spoon playing talents; and

WHEREAS, throughout Mr. Hebb's illustrious tenure with the Smoky Mountain Boys, the group performed regularly on the Grand Ole Opry's radio program and on Mr. Acuff's own Opry Matinee television show; in addition, the artists headlined at Dunbar Cave in Clarksville and performed at the Astor Roof at the Astoria in New York; and

WHEREAS, as one of the pioneering African-Americans who appeared at the Grand Ole Opry, Mr. Hebb honors those spirited artists who broke the color line, such as DeFord Bailey and Pee Wee Marquette; and

WHEREAS, a driven artist, Bobby Hebb performed spoons on several Papa John Gordy 78's released on Bullet Records, the oldest independent Nashville label, and on Bo Diddley's *Diddley Daddy* at Chess recording studio; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Hebb eventually enlisted in the United States Navy which allowed him to play the trumpet and improve his guitar skills; on board a Navy ship, he played trumpet in a jazz band called the USS Pine Island Pirates and landed regular engagements at the Great Shanghai, a cabaret in Hong Kong; and

WHEREAS, upon completing his tour of duty, Bobby Hebb returned to Nashville where he commenced playing rhythm and blues and jazz with various bands; he played guitar and sang baritone for the Hi-Fi's, wrote *You're the Only Girl For Me*, performed guitar behind the Fairfield Four, and ably worked as a session guitarist on other artists' recordings; and

WHEREAS, in 1958, he played guitar on a session for Roscoe Shelton that produced the Excello single, *Something's Wrong*; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Hebb juggled a full schedule when he joined Kid King Combo, during which the group entertained audiences at clubs, did sessions for other performers, and recorded their own Excello material; he also played guitar for Excello rhythm and blues performers Earl Gaines and Larry Birdsong; and

WHEREAS, at the end of the 1950s, Bobby Hebb cut his first solo single for Rich Records, giving the country song *Night Train to Memphis* a rhythm and blues treatment; he went on to record *I Found Somebody* in 1961, and traveled to New York City to perform at Blue Morocco where he fronted a house band and delivered such a hot mix of rhythm and blues that he earned the nickname Bobby "Mojo" Hebb; and

WHEREAS, with only a guitar and a microphone, Bobby Hebb showcased his diverse talents at several clubs in New York City during the folk music era; he shaped his stage routine by studying comic Pinkney Roberts and story-teller Bill Cosby; and

WHEREAS, penned Song-A-Day man, Mr. Hebb became a prolific songwriter, often writing five or six songs in one day, including *Cold Cold Nights*, *Betty Lou from Ohio*, *Sam Hall, Jr.*, and *I Love Mary*; and

WHEREAS, the single, *Sunny*, a quintessential pop-rock-soul-jazz crossover hit, propelled Bobby Hebb to instant celebrity status as the song peaked at number two in *Billboard* and at number one in *Cash Box*; that same year he joined the Beatles' 1966 American tour; and

WHEREAS, Bobby Hebb co-wrote *A Natural Man* with Sandy Baron, which Lou Rawls took to the top twenty in 1971; and

WHEREAS, the following year, he chalked up a surprise hit with *Love, Love, Love*, a song from the *Sunny* album, which climbed to number thirty-two on the British singles charts and set the stage for Mr. Hebb's second tour of England; and

WHEREAS, during the 1970s, Bobby Hebb recorded the single, *Evil Woman/Judy* on his own Crystal Ball Records, recorded for Laurie Records, and wrote *Proud Soul Heritage*; and

WHEREAS, today, Mr. Hebb records his own songs at Orpheus Productions in Massachusetts and continues to compose, adding to a formidable song total that numbers in the thousands; and

WHEREAS, in addition, he works on the educational children's television series *Alligator Lou* and has appeared in an episode of NBC-TV's *Unsolved Mysteries*; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that we pause in our deliberations to join in celebrating the numerous contributions Bobby Hebb has made to the music industry; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIFTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor and commend Bobby Hebb for bringing happiness to his countless fans and for playing a significant role in the growth of the music industry, as we wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.